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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001046

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MARR NATO I2 BE

SUBJECT: BELGIANS MAY RELUCTANTLY GIVE FUNDS FOR NTM-I, BUT  
NOT TO BE USED IN IRAQ

REF: STATE 73794

Classified By: POL MGURIAN for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff discussed reftel points with Belgian MFA NATO desk officer Frederic Meurice, who expressed surprise at NATO's continuing insistence on training Iraqi security forces in Iraq. He noted the Belgian reservations about supporting the Iraq war and pointed out that Belgium has always specified any funding it provides for the training of Iraqi forces has to be used outside of Iraq. Belgium contributed 300,000 Euros over the two years of 2005-2006, but attached that caveat. At one time Belgium had four police officers working in the NTM-I program who were based in Jordan and the Belgians also worked within a framework under a trilateral agreement with Germany and the UAE as they supported eight Belgian military personnel who participated in training Iraqi military in the UAE. Belgium also contributed 70,000 Euros to EUJUSTLEX, a rule of law and justice program under the EU Security and Defense Policy, to train 20 Iraqi judges and police officers in Belgium in 2008 and will probably have a similar program in 2009.

¶2. (C) Meurice said he did not think the MOD would have the budget (and a contact in the MOD agreed) to commit to new programs to train Iraqis, citing Belgian commitments to training missions in the Congo and Afghanistan. Meurice said the Belgians will more discussions on the July 1 NATO agreement to expand the NTM-I. He thought if Belgium does decide to contribute again, it would probably be only money and only under the same caveat to spend the money outside Iraq. The MOD contact said Belgium could possibly provide trainers, but he also made it very clear they would only do the training outside Iraq.

¶3. (C) Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht had planned a trip to Iraq in March, but postponed it. Meurice thinks it is De Gucht's intention to travel to Iraq, with the objective of changing and improving the bilateral relations, but Meurice had no information about possible rescheduling. According to De Gucht's office, the trip is "still under consideration."

EASON

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